1: Rivers E-5 (ca. 1901-02) 1906 Toda

more than the rest above the general level of the plateau, which ranges from 6,000 to 7,500 feet above the sea, and the loftiest of these hills reaches the height of 8,760 feet. The plateau is so high that, though it is situated only about eleven degrees from the equator, the thermometer rarely rises above 70° F., and in the nights of the cold season may touch the freezing point.

In every direction the sides of the hills leading up to the plateau are steep and often precipitous. To the south-east, east, and north-east there is a rapid fall of about 5,000 feet to the plains of the Coimbatore district, though to the south this plain only forms a gap about twenty miles in breadth between the Nilgiri and the Anaimalai Hills. On the north-west the slope is more gradual and is broken by the Wainad district about 3,000 feet above the sea. To the north there is a steep fall, but only for about 4,000 feet, to the plateau of Mysore, which is about 3,000 feet above the sea.

The south-western part of the hills is known as the Kundahs and may be regarded as a range separate from the greater part of the plateau, from which it is divided by a wide valley, the Avalanche Valley. From the Kundahs there is an extremely precipitous fall to the Malabar district.

The steep sides leading up to the plateau on which the Todas live are clothed with thick, almost impenetrable jungle, which is extremely malarious, so that a night spent on the way to the summit is very likely to produce fever.

The hills appear to have been for long an object of reverence to Hindus on account of their height and inaccessibility. Dubois states that "as it is very difficult to reach the top of this mountain, a view of the summit alone (and it is visible a long way off) is considered sufficient to remove the burden of sin from the conscience of any person who looks at it."[1]

When the hills were first visited by Europeans, their use as a sanatorium was long delayed owing to the difficulty of making roads, and it was not till after many years that the hills became a regular resort of the European population. We shall see later that the isolation of the Todas has certainly

[1] *Hindu Manners, Customs, and Ceremonies*, part ii., chap. v.

2: Marshall G-5 (1870) 1873 Toda

prairie. The hills as accessible as those of Malvern; the prairie land as ceaseless, in its long undulations, as the billows of an ocean. Short coarse grass, clothes the whole, save where the deep forest holds possession of the damp secluded valleys, or the cool little woods moss the banks of the prolonged gulleys, through which the trickling streams or dashing bourns course down the silent hill-sides: then collect, and, through successive vigorous rapids and tumultuous cataracts—where from behind the clouds of spray and mist, noise roars its prolonged approval—precipitate themselves into the plains below. Wherever, in fact, rich soil and a perennial supply of moisture may be found, there are the ever silent woods; for the periods of annual drought are long: the monsoon rain flows quickly off the hard surface of the exposed hills, and the scorched grass containing the young saplings is yearly fired.

These woods and forests, and lovely glades, whose perfect quiet is broken only by the calls of wild animals and birds, or by the rustic sounds of Toda cattle—almost equally wild—herding in the open, form pre-eminently the characteristic features of the scenery; adding emphasis to the singularly peaceful beauty of the view.

The grass, in spots where the buffalo has not grazed it short, and where moisture favours growth, is crowded with wild flowers. Climbers, in great variety of grace and form, swing in festoons from the limbs of the gnarled old forest trees, bearded with hoary lichen, or ornamented with varieties of flowering orchids, which cling to the branches of the moss-covered timber. In the dank secluded shades a great variety of ferns; from the tree-fern to those of the smallest size, grace the gloom:—

> 'O, might I here
> In solitude live savage, in some glade
> Obscured, where highest woods, impenetrable
> To star or sunlight, spread their umbrage broad.'

All round the circle of this high-perched green plateau, one unbroken sweep of low flat country, dotted with hills.

2: Marshall G-5 (1870) 1873 Toda

CHAP. V.

unbroken sweep of low flat country, dotted with hills. Picture it an island in a tropical archipelago; storm, cloud, and driving mist intervening between periods of brilliant sunshine. Try to realise the equatorial sun acting through this ever-changing sky and rarified atmosphere, both on the sweet inland prospect, and as you turn to take an eagle's view outwards, over the grand panorama of the long horizon. Both are unique and lovely.

There is one view, on the precipitous western ridge of the plateau, below Makurti Peak—

'The last hill that parleys with the setting sun,'

which seems to unite all the *possible* beauties of such a land. Such a mixture of the lovely properties which a landscape may derive from the presence of stupendous depths, brilliantly transparent and buoyant atmosphere, delicate distances, changing tints, and wonderful shadows, I have not seen combined, even in the Himalayas; and, I believe, few spots in the world can exhibit.[1]

Had the Toda made this spot the entrance to his heaven—Amnôr (of which, more in its proper place), he would at one step have placed himself on a pinnacle of good taste, from which it would not have been easy to dislodge him. But to have omitted all notice of these extraordinary beauties, marks him as the tasteless man he is.[2]

Let me here describe an *inland* scene; which, though casually witnessed by myself, must often be surveyed by the

[1] The artist in search of a study of aërial effects, could nowhere find them so complete and satisfying as in this view. Owing to monsoon rains, clear days in which to watch it cannot often be got before the month of October. To be seen to perfection, both sunrise and sunset should be witnessed.

[2] In Chapter I. I have quoted a Toda legend, that the souls of men and cattle leap from Makurti on their journey to Amnôr; but in the expression of this belief there appears to be no appreciation of the beauty in the scene;—merely that Makurti is the highest and westernmost hill, nearest the setting sun (See Chapter XII.), and therefore the *most suitable locality* for the purpose.

to do so, simply in order by change of pasture, to obtain a sufficiency of food for the cattle, on whose milk they almost entirely subsist. CHAP. VI.

I make free to assert that no tribe of people, having the organ of Concentrativeness so largely and so uniformly developed as it is with the Todas, will ever be found to be habitual wanderers. Whether it be, that in the early days of the human race, circumstances having forced a family of man to become nomadic, the form of its skull gradually changed in the course of many generations, so as to adapt the man's disposition to his necessities; or if, on the contrary, the wandering habit be largely the result of defective size of that faculty; certain it is, that practice and corresponding cranial form are now in harmony, and that a small development of Concentrativeness will be found ever accompanied by a centrifugal tendency; attachment to a settled home being strong in proportion to the organ's volume, strong even to the extent of producing nostalgia when thwarted, if associated with remembrances of home and landscape.

Toda families reside in permanent villages—Mand or Madd—having each a certain tract of grazing ground surrounding it. Each minor division of the family has a house —Ársh—in the Mand, and a share of the village land.

Nearly every Mand, however, has its duplicate, sometimes its triplicate, to which the entire body of the inhabitants migrate at certain seasons of the year, both for the sake of fresh pasturage and with the view of escaping the inclemency of situations which become exposed to the west-monsoon rain and wind.

These storms drive at times with such intense severity over the wilds, that although at the time, the actual thermal state may be far from low, yet the evaporation induced by the extreme violence of the rain is known to lower the temperature of the body so as frequently to cause death to man and beast. Wild animals cower during these storms under

3: Breeks G-5 (no date) 1873 Toda

133 of wood, dotted with isolated hummocks like giant ant-hills, and terminating in faint blue lines of mountains the furthest of which seems to hang half-way up the sky; perhaps on a tumbled mass of hills and valleys, a perfect dissolving view, for the eye has hardly traced the outline of some rocky ridge, glowing red in the sunlight, before a blue cloud-shadow blots it out, and a fresh series of crests and ravines starts into sight beyond. Broken peaks, hung with woods, frame the picture, and on all lies tropical sunlight, intensified by the keen thin mountain air.

132 The climate is temperate and equable. At Ootacamund, according to a series of observations, extending over seven years, the mean maximum temperature ranges from 60·06° in December to 68·76° in May. The hottest months of the year are April and May, the coldest, December and January. The hottest hours of the day in summer and winter do not vary more than nine degrees, and the extreme variation of temperature throughout the year is only 21·25°.

The climate of Coonoor and Kotagherry is warmer; no observations have been recorded for the Kūndahs. The average rainfall at Ootacamund is about 45 inches, but it is much greater on the Kūndahs, and generally on the western side of the plateau, which feels the full force of the S.W. monsoon.

Early in June this monsoon breaks with great violence on the western face of the mountains, but diminishes in violence as it extends eastward. At Ootacamund it is much milder than on the Kūndahs, and at Coonoor and Kotagherry it is but slightly felt. It lasts until about the middle of September. The north-east monsoon, which commences in the middle or end of October, bursts heavily on the north-east corner of the plateau, and the first fall usually extends over the whole of it. At Ootacamund, from December to May, the weather is dry and very bright; the winter nights bring sharp frosts in the swampy valleys, but on higher ground these are little felt, and English garden and greenhouse flowers may be had in profusion all the year round. The average number of days on which rain falls at Ootacamund in the course of the year is said to be 100, of cloudy days without rain 28, and of clear fine days 237.

101 The Nīlagiris are divided into four *nâds* or divisions, named respectively—

Todanâd.
Mekanâd.
Peranganâd.
Kūndanâd.

They are inhabited by five native tribes, viz.:—

Badagas.
Todas.
Kotas.
Kurumbas.
Irulas.

Of these, the Badagas, although far the most numerous, not being an aboriginal or jungle race, do not come within the scope of the following pages, which will be devoted to an account of the four primitive tribes, and of the rude stone monuments, of uncertain origin, which are found in various parts of the plateau.